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Water Levels for the
Great Lakes and
Montreal Harbour
... a monthly bulletin
from Canadian
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Service

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August Precipitation
Over the Great
Lakes

As a percentage of
the long-term August
average:

Great Lakes 110%
Basin

Lake Erie 93%
(including
Lake St.
Clair)

Lake 104%
Superior

Lakes 122%
Michigan-
Huron

Lake Ontario 109%

Note: These figures
are preliminary

August Outflows
From the Great
Lakes

Volume 9, Number 9

September 8, 2001

Levels Decline on All Lakes Except Superior

Levels on All Lakes Except Superior Lower Than One Year Ago

Lake Superior's water level rose by less than it usually does during August. The level of Lakes Michigan-Huron declined by less than usual in August, while lakes St. Clair, Erie and Ontario all declined by about their average amounts during the month. The water level of Lake Superior is currently about 8 cm higher than it was one year ago. The level of Lakes Michigan-Huron is about 8 cm lower than it was at this time last year. The levels of lakes St. Clair, Erie and Ontario are about 21, 28 and 19 cm lower than they were a year ago, respectively.

Lake Superior began September about 19 cm below its long-term average levels for this time of the year. Lakes Michigan-Huron remain about 55 cm below average--just a few centimetres above chart datum. Lakes St. Clair and Erie started September about 33 and 31 cm below average, respectively. Lake Ontario was 6 cm below average at the beginning of September.

The monthly mean level at Montréal Harbour averaged 26 cm below chart datum in August, and was below chart datum every day of the month.

The level of Lake Superior is near its annual peak and is expected to remain about the same in September as it was in August. The levels of lakes Michigan-Huron, St. Clair, Erie and Ontario are expected to continue their decline in September. Please refer to the Monthly Water Levels Bulletin for the forecast of the probable range of water levels on each lake for the next six months.

Low Water Advisory

Users of the Great Lakes, connecting channels and St. Lawrence River should keep informed of current conditions before undertaking any activities that could be affected by low water levels. Mariners should have up-to-date navigation charts and know how water levels compare to chart datum. Mariners should exercise extreme caution throughout the entire system, especially during periods of strong winds when water levels can rise (set-up) or fall (set-down) significantly in a short period of time. If near-shore water levels fall due to strong winds, facilities such as marinas, docks and boat ramps may be



As a percentage of
the long-term August
average:

Lake Superior 93%

Lake Erie 87%

Lake Huron 85%

Lake Ontario 90%

Note: These figures
are preliminary.

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"LEVELnews"

temporarily inaccessible. Similarly, municipal and commercial/industrial users that draw their water supply from the system should be aware that if their water supply intakes have not been installed deep enough, they may be at risk of exposure if a large set-down is experienced.

Did You Know?

The Great Lakes form a chain of lakes with each one draining into the next. Lake Superior, the largest of the five Great Lakes, drains into Lake Huron by way of the St. Marys River. Lake Michigan also drains into Lake Huron through the Straits of Mackinac. The straits are so wide and deep that the water levels in lakes Michigan and Huron are the same. (This is the reason we often refer to lakes Michigan and Huron as Lakes Michigan-Huron.) From Lake Huron, water flows into Lake Erie via the St. Clair River, Lake St. Clair and the Detroit River. The water then flows into Lake Ontario through the Niagara River and the Welland Canal. Lake Ontario, in turn, empties into the St. Lawrence River. From there, the water flows into the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the Atlantic Ocean. In total, water travels some 3600 km from the western end of Lake Superior to the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

There is more to the Great Lakes than just the lakes. The basin upstream of the power dam at Cornwall, Ontario/Massena, New York covers about 774 000 km² and contains a complex system of lakes, rivers and streams that flow into the Great Lakes. The five Great Lakes contain about 23 000 km³ of water covering a total area of about 244 000 km².

The Great Lakes constitute one of the largest freshwater systems on earth, containing about 18% of the world's surface freshwater. Only the polar ice caps and Lake Baikal in Siberia contain more freshwater than the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes provide water for consumption, transportation, power and recreation and play a major role in the ecology, climate, culture and economy of North America.

You can learn more about these vast inland freshwater seas, by exploring Environment Canada's Our Great Lakes web site. Our Great Lakes is an information resource that provides an index of Environment Canada's Great Lakes programs, publications and databases, and is a window to other environmental networks.

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URL: http://www.on.ec.gc.ca/water/level-news/ln200109_e.html

